

36 'C.W.', Captain Nolan's Friend

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36 [TWC 29(4) p44 2012]

William Howard Russell's classic reportage on '*The Cavalry Action at Balaklava*' (including the Charge of the Light Brigade) was written on 25 October and published in *The Times* for 14 November 1854. About Nolan, Russell stated, '...A matchless horseman and a first-rate swordsman, he held in contempt, I am afraid, even grape and canister. He rode off with his orders to Lord Lucan. God forbid that I should cast a shade on the brightness of his honour, but I am bound to state what I am told occurred when he reached his Lordship ...' Clearly, the suggestion that Nolan was at fault was immediately current. Russell moderated that implication on 28 October (published on 18 November) when he wrote, '...There is a rumour that the cause of our disaster is being closely investigated by the authorities, and that it does not appear that poor Captain Nolan was so much to blame as was first supposed by those who did not know his strict character as an officer and a soldier...'

The following letter appeared in *The Times* for Monday, November 20, 1854:

CAPTAIN NOLAN, 15th HUSSARS: TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

SIR, - I am sure you will not allow the serious imputation of giving a false order to tarnish the name of a most devoted and chivalrous officer. I have known Captain Nolan from our earliest years, and I know [original emphasis] that his ideas of discipline and passive obedience to superiors in command were carried to perhaps an extreme point. Brave as the utter absence of all sensibility to fear could render any man, he was by no means rash or inclined to act on the inspiration of a momentary enthusiasm; I very much doubt therefore that he should have assumed the unbecoming responsibility of urging Lord Lucan to any course which that General officer did not himself think fit to pursue.

Pray do not think me intrusive in requesting a suspension of judgement upon this point until the arrival of further explanation. My dearest friend has found a grave in that blood-stained peninsula - the Russian cannon has crushed no nobler heart than his - and I shame not to confess that I have wept his loss with the most poignant anguish.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant and constant subscriber,

C. W., late 15th Hussars.

Nov. 16.

Piqued by this near-anonymity, I feel that I can now identify this correspondent, given the coincidence of his forename initials and his joint service with Nolan in the 15th Hussars in India. Charles Lawrence Walpole Hinxman was born in London on October 1, 1826, to John and Kate Hinxman of Compton Street, Bloomsbury. *Hart's List for 1844* shows him as a Cornet in the 13th or Prince Albert's Regiment of Light Infantry, with two years service - appointed on 25 Oct 1842. He was not with the 15th Hussars in the 1845 List but is shown as present as a Lieutenant together with Captain Lewis Edward Nolan in the 1845 Bangalore Nominal Roll of the 15th Hussars 1 and in *Hart's List for 1846*. [The latter shows Lewis Edward Nolan as the regiment's Riding Master with seven years service: Cornet (by purchase, 15 Mar 1839), Lieutenant (by purchase, 19 June 1841.)] *The Times* for 01 May 1847, states, "A detachment of the 15th Hussars, consisting of 60 men, with Lieutenant C. Walpole Hinxman, from the cavalry depot at Maidstone, was to have embarked in the above ship ("Poictiers"), but, owing to want of accommodation, their embarkation is countermanded."

Hinxman last appeared in Hart's List (15th Hussars) for 1855, with thirteen years service: Cornet 25 Oct 1842; Lieutenant (by purchase) 30 May 1845; Captain 22 May 1855. He may have retired or been invalided out of the service. His Death Notice in the '*Gentleman's Magazine*' for August 1859, reads, 'Aged 32, Charles Lawrence Walpole Hinxman, late Capt. 15th Hussars, elder son of the late J. Hinxman, Esq., of Sudbury Grove and Queen Ann Street.'

Endnote:-

1 <http://www.britishmedals.us/files/15h.htm>